

Sabbath School Today **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

Health and Healing **Lesson 9: “Temperance”**

If we could remove even one thing from ourselves, then we could eventually remove all things from ourselves and *we would be all we ever needed*. This is the idea behind the discouragement and mandated failure of legalism.

Many have struggled to be temperate and have had to admit that not only is it difficult, but it is impossible for them and therefore something must be wrong with their conversion. They are confused because God is supposed to help them become better. They have invested all their *best efforts* and *purest thoughts* to no avail.

To believe the lie that “God helps those who help themselves” logically leads to the conclusion that might look something like this: On day 1 of being a Christian, you were able to help out for 4%, and then God would be into your agreement for 96%. Well, you learn more and so at the 5-year mark of being a Christian, you can now contribute 30%, which leaves God only indebted to provide you with 70% help. More years pass and you have practiced your techniques and perfected your performance and are now able to do 90% on your own, and this means that God is only into your belief for 10%. And then the day finally arrives when you can now depend 100% yourself and you don’t need God any further – you have made yourself god and now are 100% responsible for your own salvation. Wow.

“But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Again, “Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3). So herein lies the whole issue: You become a Christian by the Spirit of God and God continues His work in you by His Spirit, throughout your life – at no time does He need your help; at no time does your contribution do anything except to show your unbelief. The greatest failure in the life of Abraham was when he and Sarah tried to help God fulfill His promise.

God helps those who cannot help themselves and the just shall live by faith. To go beyond this is to sin. If it were possible to help ourselves, then Christ came by mistake. Our life at its worst is the evidence of our best efforts and thinking. That is as good as it gets for us in our own power.

“Nothing but faith in God can keep one perfectly patient [and temperate] under all circumstances. Will it always work? Yes, invariably. ‘Well,’ says one, ‘I am sure that anybody would be impatient [intemperate] if he had as much to trouble him as I have.’ Question: Would Christ become impatient [intemperate] if He had the things to endure that you have? Did He not have as much to endure and more? You must admit that He did. Was He impatient [intemperate]? ‘He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He

opened not His mouth' (Isa. 53:7). Then if He were in your place, He would be patient [temperate]. Why, then, do you not let Him be in your place?" (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 94).

Today we speak about the horrors of alcohol and its effect on the individual, family, and the cost to society — in and of themselves, these make a compelling argument against drinking, but the reason we are not to drink is because it is the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the only day in the entire year when God required the abstinence from alcohol; a fast for Israel; and gave specific directions concerning adornment and dress.

Today, many of us pride ourselves that we do not eat and drink certain things and we even religiously wait so many minutes before or after meals to drink anything. This is pride in full bloom — sin and the consequence of our superior effort to make ourselves clean. Waggoner is so clear that "Pride is Intoxication." So it is that we become drunk with our temperance.

Are these diet and alcohol restrictions good for us? Yes! Is this what God would like for us? Yes! Did God promise Abraham and Sarah a son? Yes! Did He intend for them to help Him make this come true? No! (Except by believing that God is able to fulfill His own promises). Has God changed? No.

The just shall live by faith — not by faith plus all you can do to help. Take the Bible as it reads.

"Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Cor. 3:16, 17).

Our body is the temple of God, and it is Christ that cleanses the sanctuary and not us. We are to humbly be in agreement with His work by saying "Amen" when He points out sins we never knew were there. "When the Lord points out a defect in our characters, it is the same as saying to us, 'There is something that you are in need of, and I have it for you.' When we learn to look at reproof in this way, we shall rejoice in it, instead of being discouraged" (*Waggoner on Romans*, p. 127).

It is important at this point to review briefly what Ellet J. Waggoner refers to as "Opposing Forces." "The flesh and the Spirit are in opposition. These are always contrary to one to the other. The Spirit never yields to the flesh, and the flesh never gets converted. The flesh will be of the nature of sin until our bodies are changed at the coming of the Lord. . . . The flesh is just the same in a converted man that it is in a sinner, but the difference is that now it [the flesh] has no power, since the man yields to the Spirit, which controls the flesh" (*ibid.*, pp. 130, 131).

Elder Robert J. Wieland has written: "It's as if Paul says, 'Go for a walk letting the Holy Spirit hold you by the hand and I guarantee you will not give in to those sinful desires of the flesh, because the Holy Spirit, the mighty Third Person of the Godhead, is stronger than your flesh!'" ("Dial Daily Bread," June 17, 1998.)

The just shall live by faith.

~Daniel Peters